NEW SHIPS FOR THE RUN TO SOUTH AFRICA: A Quarter of Passenger-Cargo ... May, John The Sphere; Jun 5, 1954; 217, 2834; ProQuest pg. 419

NEW SHIPS FOR THE RUN TO SOUTH AFRICA

A Quartet of Passenger-Cargo Liners which are Setting Entirely New Standards of Sea Travel

By JOHN MAY

THE "CITY OF DURBAN"—THE LATEST LUXURY PASSENGER-CARGO LINER WHICH IS NOW ON HER WAY TO SOUTH AFRICA: A view of the sports deck looking towards the pear-shaped funnel of the ship. The sports deck on the new liner, as on the other three Ellerman passenger-cargo ships which travel to and from South Africa, is very spacious, and provides excellent facilities for many games, including deck tennis. A hundred passengers are most comfortably accommodated on each ship.

WHEN, last Tuesday (June 1), the new passenger-cargo liner *City of Durban* steamed away down London River from the Royal Albert Docks, flying the orange, white and blue standard of South Africa, it was something more than just the beginning of a maiden voyage to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban and beyond.

The sunlit city of Durban, with indigo blue sky and tall, white-walled hotels, celebrates its centenary this year, and for that reason alone would provide an especial welcome for the ship bearing its name. But more important still is the fact that the *City of Durban* completes a quartet of ships of the Ellerman Lines, which represents a notable advance in standards of sea travel between Britain and South Africa.

The first of these four new sister-ships was the *City of Port Elizabeth*, which left London for South Africa on her maiden voyage in January last year. She and her sisters—the *City of Exeter*, *City of York* and the new *City of Durban*—each have cabins for 100 passengers on a scale that has already become embarrassingly popular. The cabins, many with entrance lobby, private bathroom and toilet, are like luxury flatlets, with no suggestion of "cabin" about them. The public rooms are as intimate and tasteful as those of a fine country house, and there is a spaciousness and a standard of personal service rarely found to-day in our crowded, bustling life ashore.

This latest evolution in a shipping group that has developed phenomenally in the fifty years is in sharp contrast to the pre-steam days of sea travel of last century. The Ellerman Lines were formed as a Group in 1901. But the Fleets which form the nucleus from which it developed had originated in the days of sail, when a sea passage was frequently something in the nature of an adventure and by no means the luxurious escape from landlocked cares that it is to-day.

The late Sir John Reeves Ellerman became connected with the Shipping Industry in 1900 when he acquired the Mediterranean Service of the Leyland Line, founded in 1821 by John Bibby. John Ellerman (as he then was) and his associates quickly acquired the Papayanni Line, the Westcott and Laurance Line, the Hall Line and the City Line.

Each of the businesses had romantic origins, the Papayanni Line having been started by two Greek brothers, a family that had sprung from Cornish privateers, and others. The City Line, of course, was the originator of the "City" nomenclature which now characterises all Ellerman Lines ships in the world-wide trades—except on the Mediterranean services. The first City ship was the *City of Glasgow*, a wooden three-master of 519 tons, built in 1848. This Line was founded by the brothers Robert and George Smith, merchants of Ayrshire and Belfast who, in 1839, sent their first ship to India and achieved a reputation second to none among Lines trading to the East. They did their work standing at high desks, maintaining that chairs in the office only tempted any caller to stay and chatter when his business was done. There had been trouble on their first vessel because of the master's drinking, so they would not allow liquor in their ships—a practice followed until the Line was purchased by the Ellerman Group.

This is, indeed, the stern stuff on which great enterprises are founded! The full history cannot be told in detail, but in 1908 the Bucknall Steamship Lines came within the orbit of the Ellerman Group, and the task of the integration of the various fleets into a composite one began. The funnel colours of the original companies were replaced by the Ellerman buff with white band and black top. But the old house flags were still flown, though surmounted now by the Ellerman pennant.

Then came the two wars which wrought such destruction to British shipping. But to-day ships flying the blue Ellerman pennant bearing the white initials "J.R.E." are to be encountered on all the oceans of the world. The Hall Line runs six services

(Continued on following pages)

A LIGHT AND AIRY ROOM IN WHICH TO RELAX: The verandah café, with its fine dance floor, is situated at the aft end of the promenade deck on the *City of Exeter*. There is unlimited natural light from the big windows. In the same large room there is also a bar.

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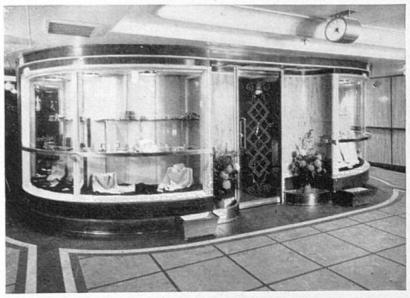

THE POPULAR SHIP'S SHOP : The bow-fronted shop on the *City of York*. These shops, which stock numerous souvenirs as well as many articles for daily use, are immensely popular with passengers during the journey.

THE BAR IN THE VERANDAH CAFE : A smart rendezvous at the forward end of the café. The coat-of-arms of the city after which the ship is named, in this case of Exeter, is illuminated in a panel in the centre.

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from the United Kingdom, the City Line two, and the Ellerman and Bucknall Line four, with another dozen from Canada and the U.S.A. A world-wide network links every continent. As well, the Ellerman Line, the Westcott and Laurance Line, and the Papayanni Line run four Mediterranean services from the United Kingdom.

But it is a startling fact that of more than 100 ships in the Ellerman Group's fleet in 1939, the war destroyed over 60; including the Line's finest passenger ships. The rebuilding policy immediately afterwards was centred at first round vessels of about 11,000 tons, with room for twelve passengers. The "Twelves" were built with single and two-berth cabins of unusual size and comfort, some with private bathrooms and toilets. The passenger dining-room and lounge were of ample proportions, and the ships gained a great reputation among travellers for their comfort and friendly atmosphere, particularly on the run to South Africa. But they were essentially first-class general cargo-carriers, and their limited passenger capacity meant disappointing many who wished to travel by Ellerman and Bucknall Line on this run.

Something had to be done. Accordingly, the order was placed with Vickers-Armstrongs Limited for the 12,500-ton *City of Port Elizabeth* and her three sister-ships, to link South Africa and Britain. With the completion of the quartet now, and the sailing of the fourth sister, the *City of Durban*, the total of ships acquired by the Ellerman Lines to replace war losses is well past sixty. The fleet is almost back to its pre-war strength, but it is also doing more by setting a standard not envisaged in the '30s of this century.

Joyfully welcomed to the high seas by others of the fleet that she encounters on her maiden voyage, the *City of Durban* will take sixteen days to reach Cape Town. Three-quarters of the voyage will be in sunshine, and as the sun becomes more northerly, and by night the North Pole star and the Plough are lost to sight and the Southern Cross rises in the sky, passengers aboard will gain a full appreciation of the ship's comforts.

She is 541 ft. in length overall, and the hull comprises three complete decks, with a long bridge deck having promenade and boat decks superimposed. The 100 passengers, even when gathered together into one of the public rooms, will never feel crowded; and they will find that their own bedrooms are the essence of comfort. On "A" Deck are fourteen double and fourteen single rooms, all with private bathrooms, while on "B" Deck are nineteen double and four single rooms, fitted to the same standard as the "A" Deck rooms, but without private bathrooms; there is an ample number of bathrooms on "B" Deck.

With the exception of six single rooms arranged to look forward from the end of the deckhouse, all the "A" Deck rooms face the open shipside promenade. They have natural light from vertical sliding windows, while the rooms on "B" Deck are ranged along the ship's side, with large, oval sidelight windows. With their carpets toning with the scheme of decoration, the rooms have walls of pale cream or pale green, with pale-cream ceilings. The furniture in the forward six single rooms is in curl figured sycamore and zebrano trim; it includes a dressing-table with stool, bureau and chair, tallboy, settee, bedside cabinet, etc. Half the remaining rooms have furniture of French walnut, and the remainder of bird's-eye maple.

ELEGANCE AND COMFORT ARE THE KEYNOTE IN THE SMOKE-ROOM : A view of the smoke-room which extends the full width of the deckhouse on the *City of Exeter*. There are large comfortable settees and upholstered chairs, and a number of coffee and card tables, which are made in Jacobean style in rubbed oak.

A stairway from the foyer on "B" Deck leads down to the restaurant, a spacious and handsome room, which extends across the full width of the vessel and seats the entire complement of passengers at one service. The chairs are upholstered in hide in matching soft colours, and the furniture is constructed of white figured sycamore. Ellerman ships are noted for their good food; and the adjacent kitchens and pantries—complete with the ship's own bakery—provide for swift service by the efficient Indian servants, many of whom belong to families that have served in Ellerman Group ships for generations.

Opposite the stairway on "A" Deck is the ship's shop, neatly bow-fronted in veneered sycamore, with glass-panelled doors. Its display cabinets and showcases contain souvenirs and articles for daily use, including cigarettes, cigars, chocolates and cosmetics, all at duty-free prices. Behind the shop are the ladies' and gentlemen's hairdressing saloons. So popular is the shop that on the *City of Durban's* three sister-ships it is found that the average passenger spends something like £2 a day on the goods and services offered there.

Then, at the after-end of "A" Deck is a children's playroom. The walls are decorated with colourful illustrations of nursery rhymes, and the floor is marked out for games. At one side of the room is a roundabout, and on the other a Wendy play-house with table, chairs and cupboard shelves. There is a room for preparing infants' foods near by, and for fine weather an open-air play-pen is arranged on "B" Deck.

On the promenade deck there is generous room for adult passengers to pursue their own recreations. The promenade itself, with wooden decking scrubbed spotless, is wide enough to permit deck games without interfering with passengers seated in deck chairs, and is entirely open except at the forward end. Here, for weather protection, a full-length screen is arranged with large sliding windows, with glass almost to deck-level, giving an unobscured view of the sea. Encircled by the promenade are the drawing-room, smoke-room, writing-room and verandah café.

The drawing-room is at the forward end. With chairs and settees for lounging, coffee tables, bookcases, a piano and a record player, and a painting by Pierre de Clausade above the fireplace, it is a tasteful and restful place. Further aft, and also extending the full width of the deckhouse, is the smoke-room. Decorated in the style of the Georgian period, its walls are lined with carved pine panelling, and the parquetry floor

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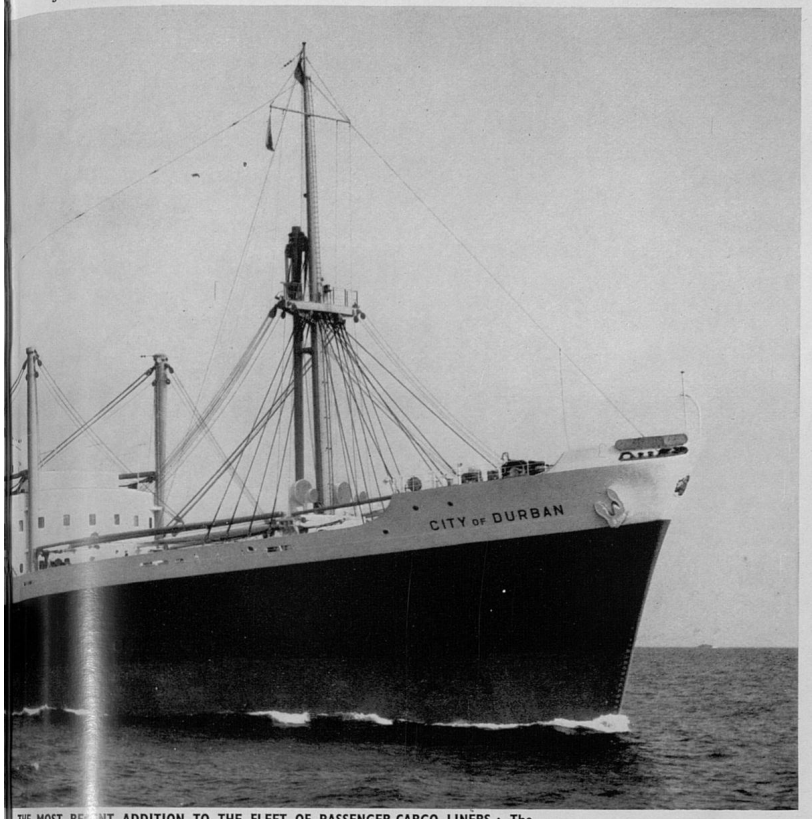
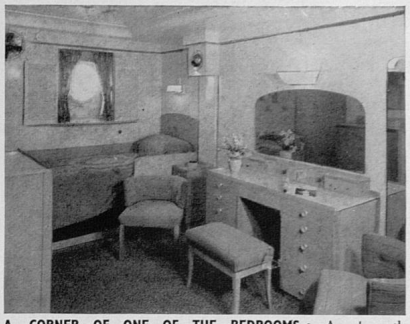
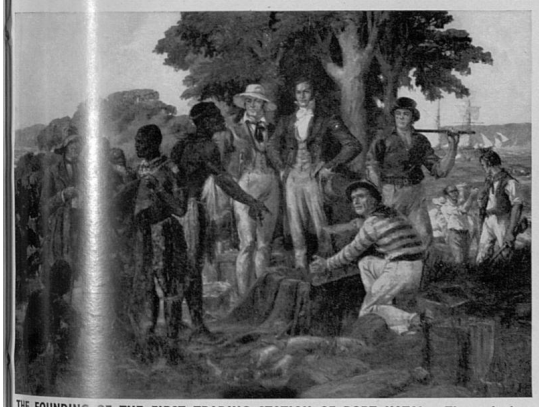


THE MOST RECENT ADDITION TO THE FLEET OF PASSENGER-CARGO LINERS : The *City of Durban*, which is a sister-ship of the *City of Port Elizabeth*, *City of Exeter* and *City of York*, all built by Vickers-Armstrongs.



A CORNER OF ONE OF THE BEDROOMS : A pleasantly furnished and comfortable room on the "B" Deck of the *City of Durban*. On this deck there are nineteen double and four single rooms, while "A" Deck has fourteen double and fourteen single bedrooms, each with separate bathrooms.

THE ENTRANCE FOYER ON THE "CITY OF DURBAN" : In the centre is a map on which passengers can watch the course of the ship as she passes certain points on the route.



THE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST TRADING STATION OF PORT NATAL : The painting by Ellis Silas which hangs above the main staircase on the *City of Durban*. The settlement of Natal in August 1824, of which the City of Durban is to-day the greatest monument, was due almost entirely to the adventurous spirit and daring of an English lieutenant in the Royal Marines. Francis George Farewell, who had turned merchant adventurer, was trading around the coasts from Cape Town when he was forced into Durban Bay by a heavy gale. He and his friends later returned, and gained the first trading concessions there from the savage Zulu King Chaka.

PART OF THE SPACIOUS RESTAURANT : This well-furnished room on the *City of Durban* is situated below "B" Deck. It extends the whole width of the vessel, and is large enough to allow the full complement of 100 passengers to be comfortably served at one sitting.

has Persian rugs. Inset into the panelling above the fireplace is a painting of the Temple as seen from the River Thames in about the year 1840.

The writing-room is a quiet and comfortable place on the port side, aft of the smoke-room. It contains some 300 books—"all the new ones that I meant to read in the last twelve months," remarked a passenger on embarking. The walls carry two landscapes in oils by T. S. Barber, and there is an illuminated terrestrial globe.

The way to the writing-room is through the smoke-room or from the verandah café at the after-end of the deckhouse. The café has a cocktail bar, unlimited natural light from the large windows, and a teak deck in the middle of the room for dancing. Stairways near by lead to the sports deck above, and folding screen doors convert the café into a true verandah overlooking the swimming-pool on the deck below. The blue-tiled sides and bottom of the pool, with its underwater lighting, make it an attractive sight. "One of the joys of life in the hot climates," said a lady passenger on one of the *City of Durban's* sister-ships, "is to have a swim last thing at night before going to bed."

As an addition to the amusements arranged by the sports committee (always formed by the passengers) and the purser, the *City of Durban* carries a complete cinema projection unit, together with light stacking-type chairs which are arranged in one of the public rooms or on the sports deck, according to weather, when a film is to be shown.

In one of the same public rooms on Sunday mornings, the master of the ship, Captain John Armstrong White (who was torpedoed in the *City of Bagdad* in the Indian Ocean during the war, and made a prisoner in Italian East Africa) will conduct the usual shipboard morning service.

As the days of the *City of Durban's* maiden voyage pass, marked by such events as these, passengers will be following their progress as indicated by a point of light on the illuminated route chart on the starboard side of the purser's reception bureau in the main entrance on "B" Deck. The ship will make Cape Town in a fortnight's time, on June 18, call at Port Elizabeth and then East London, and come next to Durban itself.

Aboard for the maiden voyage is Mr. Leslie Steeds Lloyd, managing director of the Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Company and a director of the Ellerman Lines. He will certainly be in evidence when Durban welcomes the new *City of Durban*. There is a carved teak plaque of the Durban coat-of-arms, presented by the mayor and citizens, to be unveiled on board. In addition, by a happy coincidence, the city has also its own centenary to celebrate, for it was in 1854 that the port of D'Urban (as it was then called) was first proclaimed a borough.

The name was that of a governor of the Cape of Good Hope. But the original settlement of Natal had been brought about by the tenacity of a lieutenant in the British Royal Marines, Francis George Farewell, who in 1824 pioneered a trading agreement with the Zulu despot of those times, a bad man named Chaka, and founded the first trading station of Port Natal.

This occasion is celebrated by a large painting by Ellis Silas in the *City of Durban's* entrance hall. Francis Farewell's ship was a brig that was blown out to sea, leaving him marooned on the Zululand coast. But his enterprise could not be more fittingly remembered than in the fourth of the Ellerman Lines quartet of passenger-cargo liners, the *City of Durban*, which, with her sister "Hundreds," is also pioneering a new idea in the trade of the seaways to South Africa.

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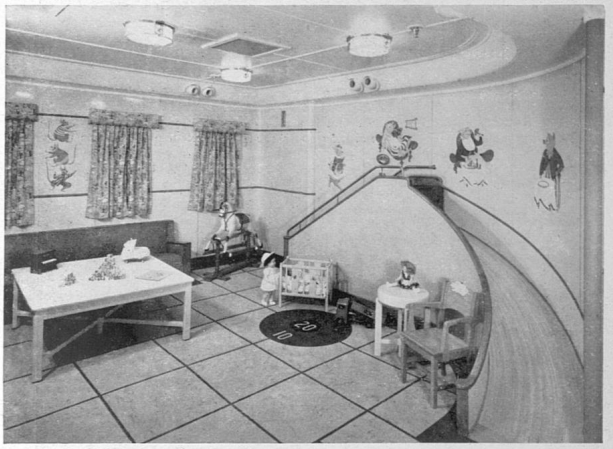
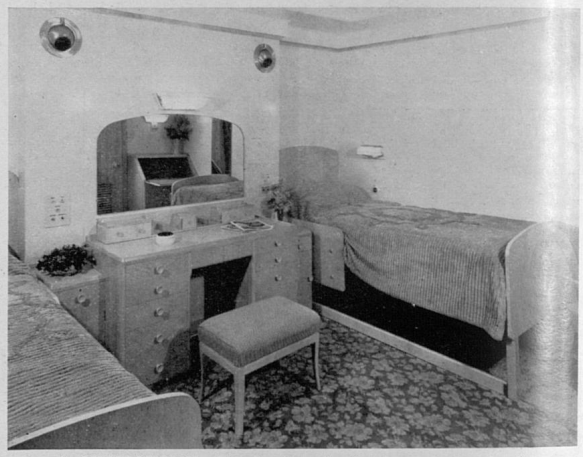
THE SWIMMING-POOL AND SUN DECK : This part of "A" Deck on the *City of Exeter* promises many pleasant hours in the sun and refreshing plunges in the water. The sides of the swimming-pool are in pale-blue tiles relieved by a band of cream tiles, while tiles of a deeper shade of blue line the bottom of the pool. There is also underwater lighting. Bathing at night is especially popular.

THE SMOKE-ROOM ON BOARD THE "CITY OF DURBAN" : This room is furnished in the Georgian period, and the walls are of carved pine panelling. The main furniture is in walnut. Above the fireplace is a 19th-century painting of the Temple and the Thames Embankment.



THE CHILDREN ARE NOT NEGLECTED : The children's playroom on the *City of Exeter*, showing the miniature curved slide. On the walls are pictures of animals and nursery rhymes. Deck games are incorporated in the floor-coverings. For fine weather open-air play-pens are arranged on "B" Deck.



A DOUBLE-BEDROOM : The furniture in these rooms—they hardly look like cabins—is of modern design, and includes a dressing-table with a stool to match, a bureau and chair, settees, bedside cabinets, etc. All the rooms on "A" Deck face on to an open promenade.

THE INTIMATE ATMOSPHERE OF THE DRAWING-ROOM : This most attractive room has comfortable furnishings, which include lounge chairs, fully-upholstered settees, bookcases and a writing-table. It is a restful room, with no hint of the impersonal atmosphere usually found in large public rooms aboard ship.

THE WRITING-ROOM : The quiet, comfortable room on the promenade deck of the *City of Port Elizabeth*. It conveniently separates the verandah café and the smoke-room. The writing-room also contains a good library of over 300 books, most of them recently published.

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